IN THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application. An identifier indicating the status of each claim is provided.

Listing of Claims

1-58. (Canceled)

59. (New) A method for gathering and validating referrals for use in generating a website, comprising:

requesting a list of companies for referrals;

validating the list of companies to obtain a valid set of company names;

presenting the valid set of company names to select for inclusion in the referrals;

receiving a list of selected companies;

sending a notification to owners of the selected companies informing them of the referral;

requesting the owners of the selected companies refer back to the website; and

generating one or more referral pages for those owners that have elected to refer back to the website.

60. (New) The method according to claim 59, further comprising:

generating one or more referral pages for those owners that have elected to refer back to the website as a function of one or more characteristics of the website.

61. (New) The method according to claim 59, wherein the referral pages include at least a link back to the website.

62. (New) The method according to claim 59, further comprising:

informing that one or more of the owners have elected not to refer back to the website.

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63.   (New) The method according to claim 59, wherein the step of validating
further comprises:

obtaining a valid set of standard industry codes (SIC) for the valid set of company
names;

64.   (New) The method according to claim 59, further comprising:

adding to the valid set of company names one or more standard referral
companies that have paid a fee for being added as referrals.

65.   (New) The method according to claim 59, further comprising:

determining if owners of one or more of the selected companies are members of
the same network as the website; and

sending notifications to the owners of one or more of the selected companies
inviting the owners to join the same network as the website if the owners are determined to not
be members of the same network as the website.

66.   (New) The method according to claim 59, wherein the step of presenting
a valid set of company names comprises:

presenting a prompt for an acceptance of each company in the valid set of
company names.

67.   (New) An apparatus for gathering and validating referrals for use in
generating a website, comprising:

means for requesting a list of companies for referrals;

means for validating the list of companies to obtain a valid set of company names;

means for presenting the valid set of company names to select for inclusion in the
referrals;

means for receiving a list of selected companies;

means for sending a notification to owners of the selected companies informing
them of the referral;

means for requesting the owners of the selected companies to refer back to the
website; and

means for generating one or more referral pages for those owners that have elected to refer back to the website.

68.   (New) The apparatus according to claim 67, further comprising:

means for generating one or more referral pages for those owners that have elected to refer back to the website as a function of one or more characteristics of the website.

69.   (New) The apparatus according to claim 67, wherein the referral pages include at least a link back to the website.

70.   (New) The apparatus according to claim 67, further comprising:

means for informing that one or more of the owners have elected not to refer back to the website.

71.   (New) The apparatus according to claim 67, wherein the means for validating further comprises:

means for obtaining a valid set of standard industry codes (SIC) for the valid set of company names;

72.   (New) The apparatus according to claim 67, further comprising:

means for adding to the valid set of company names one or more standard referral companies that have paid a fee for being added as referrals.

73.   (New) The apparatus according to claim 67, further comprising:

means for determining if owners of one or more of the selected companies are members of the same network as the website; and

means for sending notifications to the owners of one or more of the selected companies inviting the owners to join the same network as the website if the owners are determined to not be members of the same network as the website.

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74.   (New) The apparatus according to claim 67, wherein the means for presenting a valid set of company names comprises:

means for presenting a prompt for an acceptance of each company in the valid set of company names.

75.   (New) A system for gathering and validating referrals for use in generating a website, comprising:

at least one memory; and

at least one processor, coupled to the memory, the processor adapted to execute program code to:

request a list of companies for referrals;

validate the list of companies to obtain a valid set of company names;

present the valid set of company names to select for inclusion in the referrals;

receive a list of selected companies;

send a notification to owners of the selected companies informing them of the referral;

request the owners of the selected companies to refer back to the website; and

generate one or more referral pages for those owners that have elected to refer back to the website.

76.   (New) A computer-readable medium, carrying a set of computer program instructions, which when executed causes a computer to perform a process for gathering and validating referrals for use in generating a website, the process comprising:

requesting a list of companies for referrals;

validating the list of companies to obtain a valid set of company names;

presenting the valid set of company names to select for inclusion in the referrals;

receiving a list of selected companies;

sending a notification to owners of the selected companies informing them of the referral;

requesting the owners of the selected companies to refer back to the website; and

generating one or more referral pages for those owners that have elected to refer back to the website.

77.   (New) A method for gathering and validating web site referrals for a first web site over a network, comprising the steps of:

presenting a referral page at a client terminal, the referral page requesting a list of businesses related to the first web site;

receiving a first data entry, wherein the first data entry includes at least one business name;

validating each of the at least one business names;

correlating each of the at least one business names with a second web site;

presenting a list of validated business names to an operator of the first web site, wherein the operator has authority to edit the first web site;

receiving a second data entry, wherein the second data entry includes selection of at least one of the validated business names;

presenting a referral page to an operator of the second web site requesting acceptance of the referral;

generating a referral from the first web site to the second web site; and

presenting the operator of the second web site with an option to automatically generate a referral from the second web site to the first web site.

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